

VZCZCXRO5951
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHBP #0421 0971327
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 071327Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5231
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0006
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0015

UNCLAS BAMAKO 000421

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF, DRL, INR

PARAMARIBO FOR DCM MARY BETH LEONARD
LIBREVILLE FOR POLOFF GLENN FEDZER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ML](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTORAL LOSSES AND LOW TURNOUT TRIGGER ANGRY
SPEECH BY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT

REF: BAMAKO 0401 (NOTAL)

¶1. (U) Summary. One week after a poor showing by the Rally for Mali (RPM) in legislative by-elections, RPM leader and National Assembly President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) opened the April session of the National Assembly with an extremely critical speech decrying the state of Malian democracy. Meanwhile, the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) party and the Citizen Movement of President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) consolidated their position just days before the April 9 run-off for the National Assembly seat in Bamako's fifth district. End Summary.

IBK: MALI NO LONGER A DEMOCRATIC "SUCCESS STORY"

¶2. (U) On April 3, IBK opened the National Assembly's spring session with a speech questioning Mali's status as a democratic "success story". With Prime Minister Issoufi Maiga looking on, IBK argued that voter disinterest during last week's legislative by-elections posed a threat to Mali's national unity. "When choices are made by such a pathetic percentage of the electorate," stated IBK, "it is difficult to talk about democratic expression...Can we continue to pretend that we are the champions of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa when our own system of representation is so clearly suspect and shaken to its core?"

¶3. (U) Referring to the March 26 Democracy Day celebrations that occurred on the same day as the by-elections, IBK questioned the sincerity of those honoring the "martyrs" of the 1991 popular uprising that ousted former dictator Moussa Traore. "How many of the tributes," asked IBK, "were sincere and in step with the daily behavior of their authors?"

¶4. (SBU) Comment: IBK was clearly responding to what political observers regard as a serious setback for the RPM following the legislative by-elections in Mopti and Bamako. While the record low 7% voter participation rate in Bamako caught all sides of the political spectrum by surprise, the turnout rate during one off-year by-election is not a particularly reliable indicator of the state of Malian democracy. The rather respectable turnout of 38% during the same elections in Mopti, moreover, render IBK's warnings about threats to Malian national unity somewhat hollow. IBK's reference to insincere Democracy Day tributes was likely directed at Prime Minister Maiga (see Ref A) and

perhaps ATT himself. End comment.

ATT'S CITIZEN MOVEMENT WEIGHS IN

¶5. (U) In Bamako's fifth district, ADEMA reinforced its position just days before the April 9 legislative run-off by adding another party to its 22 member coalition. During a joint press conference with the president of ATT's Citizen Movement association, ADEMA announced that it has secured the endorsement of the third place candidate who received 17% of the vote during the first round.

¶6. (U) The battle between ADEMA and the Union for Republic and Democracy (URD) in Bamako is striking given the recent URD-ADEMA alliance in Mopti. According to the president of ATT's Citizen Movement, Djibril Tangara, the apparent contradiction is easily explained: the URD opposed the RPM in Mopti but joined with the RPM in Bamako. "I am not," stated Tangara on behalf of the Citizen Movement, "ready to help someone who is in the parliamentary opposition. Those who speak against the government are negative. Since the RPM criticizes the government, the RPM is negative... As a result, the Citizen Movement cannot support the URD in the fifth district because the URD is allied with the RPM. In Mopti, where the URD is positive, it has the support of both ADEMA and our Movement."

McCulley